

The Dark Side of Practice: Outcomes of Practice Performance

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Kaeley Timmel, Lyndsea Smith, Keaton A. Fletcher, & Wendy L. Bedwell

Effective training provides learners with information, demonstration, varied practice, and feedback. Little work has examined the strain risks associated with this method. Specifically, what effect does practice performance and feedback have on strain outcomes? We address this question by examining the effects of dispositional mindfulness and training performance on (1) psychological distress post training performance and (2) training utility reactions.

Participants were trained on a card-sorting task. After watching a training video, the participants were then given ten minutes to practice the task. Upon completion, the experimenter walked the participant through the scoring of their performance, explaining ways to improve.

Immediately following feedback, participants rated their satisfaction with the overall training as well as their psychological strain. Multiple hierarchical regressions suggest that trait mindfulness is a negative predictor of psychological strain ($\Delta R^2 = .20, p < .001$) and a positive predictor of training reactions ($\Delta R^2 = .08, p = .001$). Above and beyond the effects of mindfulness, the number of errors made during the training performance session positively predicts psychological strain ($\Delta R^2 = .02, p = .04$) and negatively predicts utility reactions ($\Delta R^2 = .08, p < .001$).

This suggests individuals who perform poorly during practice experienced distress and saw less utility of the training program. After accounting for the psychological resources trainees begin with, their negative performance during training explains strain outcomes. Training programs should consider better preparing trainees for practice performance episodes, or equip them with resources to help mitigate the effects of poor training performance.